

Notice of Allowability

Application No.

09/753,728

Examiner

Susanna M. Diaz

Applicant(s)

ARAKI ET AL.

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address--

All claims being allowable, PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS (OR REMAINS) CLOSED in this application. If not included herewith (or previously mailed), a Notice of Allowance (PTOL-85) or other appropriate communication will be mailed in due course. **THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWABILITY IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS.** This application is subject to withdrawal from issue at the initiative of the Office or upon petition by the applicant. See 37 CFR 1.313 and MPEP 1308.

1. ☒ This communication is responsive to the Examiner's Amendment agreed to on June 16, 2006 and June 19, 2006.
2. ☒ The allowed claim(s) is/are 1-7, 9-29, 31-44, 46 and 48-89.
3. ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 - a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some* c) ☐ None of the:
 1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* Certified copies not received: _____.

Applicant has THREE MONTHS FROM THE "MAILING DATE" of this communication to file a reply complying with the requirements noted below. Failure to timely comply will result in ABANDONMENT of this application.
THIS THREE-MONTH PERIOD IS NOT EXTENDABLE.

4. ☐ A SUBSTITUTE OATH OR DECLARATION must be submitted. Note the attached EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT or NOTICE OF INFORMAL PATENT APPLICATION (PTO-152) which gives reason(s) why the oath or declaration is deficient.
 5. ☐ CORRECTED DRAWINGS (as "replacement sheets") must be submitted.
 - (a) ☐ including changes required by the Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) attached
 - 1) ☐ hereto or 2) ☐ to Paper No./Mail Date _____.
 - (b) ☐ including changes required by the attached Examiner's Amendment / Comment or in the Office action of Paper No./Mail Date _____.
- Identifying indicia such as the application number (see 37 CFR 1.84(c)) should be written on the drawings in the front (not the back) of each sheet. Replacement sheet(s) should be labeled as such in the header according to 37 CFR 1.121(d).
6. ☐ DEPOSIT OF and/or INFORMATION about the deposit of BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL must be submitted. Note the attached Examiner's comment regarding REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEPOSIT OF BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL.

Attachment(s)

1. ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2. ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3. ☒ Information Disclosure Statements (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No./Mail Date 5/2/05, 3/5/04, 8/22/03, 4/25/04, 7/5/04
4. ☐ Examiner's Comment Regarding Requirement for Deposit of Biological Material
5. ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6. ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413),
Paper No./Mail Date _____
7. ☒ Examiner's Amendment/Comment
8. ☒ Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance
9. ☐ Other _____

Susanna Diaz
SUSANNA M. DIAZ
PRIMARY EXAMINER
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EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

1. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Matthew Blackburn (Reg. No. 47,428) on June 16, 2006 and June 19, 2006.

The application has been amended as follows:

Claim 1. (currently amended): A work assignment system for assigning and composing a work formed from a plurality of work units to a plurality of stations, comprising:

display means for displaying names of the plurality of work units;

condition input means for inputting a user-selected manufacturing condition;

assignment means for dividing the plurality of work units in accordance with the user-selected manufacturing condition and assigning one group of the divided work units to a station, said assignment means comprises user interface means for attaching information representing parallel operation of works to the plurality of work units, and making a plurality of composition plans in consideration of the attached parallel operation and sending the composition plans to said output means, and code attachment

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means for causing a user to attach a single group code to a plurality of work units in order to assign the plurality of work units to a single station; and

output means for outputting an assignment result of the work units of each station to a work assignment file as a composition plan, said output means assigns work units having the same group code to a station corresponding to the group code,

wherein each work standard as an assignment target has data representing continuous and parallel operations of work units, and said assignment means comprises means for detecting that the user executes, for an arbitrary work standard, group designation to alter the continuous and parallel operations through said code attachment means, and means for, when the detection is done, outputting a warning message or inhibiting the group designation.

Claim 2. (previously presented): The system according to claim 1, wherein said output means displays the names of the work units assigned to each station in units of stations.

Claim 3. (previously presented): The system according to claim 1, wherein the user-selected manufacturing condition is an average value of manhours necessary to execute all the work units in the station.

Claim 4. (previously presented): The system according to claim 1, wherein each of the plurality of work units has manhour value data, and said system further comprises calculation means for calculating a total manhour of the plurality of work units, and

means for entering a value of the total manhour calculated by said calculation means as partial data of the user-selected manufacturing condition.

Claim 5. (currently amended): The system according to claim 1, wherein said condition input means displays, on said display means, at least [[a]] one user interface for inputting numerical values of items including the number of units to be produced in one day, an operation time of a production workshop, and a target composition efficiency as the user-selected manufacturing conditions.

Claim 6. (previously presented): The system according to claim 1, further comprising:

means for displaying an arbitrary work unit group, and
user interface means for selecting one of more work units from the displayed work unit group.

Claim 7. (previously presented): The system according to claim 6, wherein the arbitrary work unit group is classified into one of a component group formed from a plurality of work units, a model group formed from a plurality of components, a representative model group formed from a plurality of models, and a genre group formed from a plurality of representative models.

Claim 8. (cancelled).

Claim 9. (previously presented): The system according to claim 1, wherein said output means visually displays and outputs the total manhour of the work units of each station.

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Claim 10. (previously presented): The system according to claim 1, wherein said output means displays the total manhour of the work units of each station in a form of a bar graph.

Claim 11. (previously presented): The system according to claim 1, wherein a window of said display means is divided into a first display area and a second display area, and said output means displays the bar graph of the total manhour of the work units of each station in the first display area and the work units belonging to the station in the second display area in units of stations, the stations in the first display area and those in the second display area being correspondingly displayed.

Claim 12. (previously presented): The system according to claim 1, wherein said output means correspondingly displays the bar graph of the total manhour of the work units of each station and the work units belonging to the station.

Claim 13. (previously presented): The system according to claim 1, wherein the assignment result is displayed as the bar graph of the total manhour in units of stations.

Claim 14. (previously presented): The system according to claim 1, wherein the assignment result is displayed as a list of work units put together in units of stations and belonging to each station.

Claim 15. (previously presented): The system according to claim 1, further comprising:

user interface means for providing a user interface for further correcting the assignment result output by said output means in units of stations, and

means for receiving editing information input by said user interface means and correcting the assignment result.

Claim 16. (currently amended): The system according to claim 1, wherein correction of a station is executed by deleting the station, adding a new station, exchanging an arbitrary work standard in the station with an arbitrary work standard in another station, ~~adding station, adding~~ an arbitrary work standard to an arbitrary work standard in the station, or dividing a work standard belonging to the station into two stations.

Claim 17. (previously presented): The system according to claim 10, wherein correction of a station is executed by deleting the station, adding a new station, exchanging an arbitrary work standard in the station with an arbitrary work standard in another station, adding an arbitrary work standard to an arbitrary work standard in the station, or dividing a work standard belonging to the station into two stations, and correcting a length of a bar graph of the station related to the correction in accordance with a correction result.

Claim 18. (previously presented): The system according to claim 1, further comprising a user interface means for displaying a window for authenticating a user of the work assignment system .

Claim 19. (original): The system according to claim 17, wherein a station to be added includes a check work standard.

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Claim 20. (previously presented): The system according to claim 3, wherein said output means displays a total manhour of the work units of each station in a form of a bar graph in units of stations, and for a bar graph of a station including a work standard having a manhour larger than the average manhour value, a height of the bar graph is increased to limit a height of the bar graph.

Claim 21. (original): The system according to claim 1, wherein said system further comprises a database containing information related to a skill or experience of an operator, and said output means extracts the information related to the skill or experience of operators assigned in units of stations and displays the information together on a display window of said display means.

Claim 22. (currently amended): A distributed client/server database system comprising:

a server including the work assignment file containing a composition plan that comprises a plurality of work units for a plurality of stations; and

a plurality of clients, each of the clients ~~having~~ comprising display means for displaying names of the plurality of work units, condition input means for inputting a user-selected manufacturing condition, [[and]] assignment means for dividing the plurality of work units in accordance with the user-selected manufacturing condition and assigning one group of the divided work units to a station, said assignment means comprises user interface means for attaching information representing parallel operation of works to the plurality of work units, and making a plurality of composition plans in

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consideration of the attached parallel operation and sending the composition plans to said output means, and code attachment means for causing a user to attach a single group code to a plurality of work units in order to assign the plurality of work units to a single station, and output means for outputting an assignment result of the work units of each station to a work assignment file as a composition plan, said output means assigns work units having the same group code to a station corresponding to the group code,

wherein each work standard as an assignment target has data representing continuous and parallel operations of work units, and said assignment means comprises means for detecting that the user executes, for an arbitrary work standard, group designation to alter the continuous and parallel operations through said code attachment means, and means for, when the detection is done, outputting a warning message or inhibiting the group designation.

Claim 23. (currently amended): A work assignment method of assigning and composing a work formed from a plurality of work units to a plurality of stations, comprising:

a display step of displaying names of the plurality of work units;

a condition input step of inputting a user-selected manufacturing condition;

an assignment step of dividing the plurality of work units in accordance with the user-selected manufacturing condition and assigning one group of the divided work units to a station, said assignment step comprises attaching information representing parallel operation of works to the plurality of work units, and making a plurality of composition

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plans in consideration of the attached parallel operation and sending the composition plans to said output means, and said assignment step further comprising causing a user to attach a single group code to a plurality of work units in order to assign the plurality of work units to a single station; and

an output step of outputting an assignment result of the work units of each station to a work assignment file as a composition plan, said output means assigns work units having the same group code to a station corresponding to the group code,

wherein each work standard as an assignment target has data representing continuous and parallel operations of work units, and said assignment step comprises detecting that the user executes, for an arbitrary work standard, group designation to alter the continuous and parallel operations through said code attachment means, and means for, when the detection is done, outputting a warning message or inhibiting the group designation.

Claim 24. (previously presented): The method according to claim 23, wherein, in said output step, the names of the work units assigned to each station in units of stations are displayed.

Claim 25. (previously presented): The method according to claim 23, wherein the user-selected manufacturing condition is an average value of manhours necessary to execute all the work units in the station.

Claim 26. (previously presented): The method according to claim 23, wherein each of the plurality of work units has manhour value data, and said method further

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comprises a calculation step of calculating a total manhour of the plurality of work units, and a step of entering a value of the total manhour calculated in said calculation step as partial data of the user-selected manufacturing condition.

Claim 27. (original): The method according to claim 23, wherein, in said condition input step, at least a user interface for inputting numerical values of items including the number of units to be produced in one day, an operation time of a production workshop, and a target composition efficiency as the user-selected manufacturing conditions are displayed.

Claim 28. (previously presented): The method according to claim 23, further comprising:

a step of displaying an arbitrary work unit group, and
a user interface step of selecting one or more work units from the displayed work unit group.

Claim 29. (previously presented): The method according to claim 28, wherein the arbitrary work unit group is classified into one of a component group formed from a plurality of work units, a model group formed from a plurality of components, a representative model group formed from a plurality of models, and a genre group formed from a plurality of representative models.

Claim 30. (cancelled).

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Claim 31. (previously presented): The method according to claim 23, wherein, in said output step, the total manhour of the work units of each station is visually displayed and outputted.

Claim 32. (previously presented): The method according to claim 23, wherein, in said output step, the total manhour of the work units of each station in a form of a bar graph is displayed.

Claim 33. (previously presented): The method according to claim 23, wherein a window of said display step is divided into a first display area and a second display area, and in said output step, the bar graph of the total manhour of the work units of each station is displayed in the first display area and the work units belonging to the station is displayed in the second display area in units of stations, in which the stations in the first display area and those in the second display area being correspondingly displayed.

Claim 34. (previously presented): The method according to claim 23, wherein, in said output step, the bar graph of the total manhour of the work units of each station and the work units belonging to the station are correspondingly displayed.

Claim 35. (previously presented): The method according to claim 23, wherein the assignment result is displayed as the bar graph of the total manhour in units of stations.

Claim 36. (previously presented): The method according to claim 23, wherein the assignment result is displayed as a list of work units put together in units of stations and belonging to each station.

Claim 37. (previously presented): The method according to claim 23, further comprising:

a user interface step of providing a user interface for further correcting the assignment result output in said output step in units of stations, and

a step of receiving editing information input in the user interface step and correcting the assignment result.

Claim 38. (previously presented): The method according to claim 23, wherein, in said correction step, deleting the station, adding a new station, exchanging an arbitrary work standard in the station with an arbitrary work standard in another station, adding an arbitrary work standard to an arbitrary work standard in the station, or dividing a work standard belonging to the station into two stations is performed as correction operation of the station.

Claim 39. (previously presented): The method according to claim 32, wherein, in said correction step, deleting the station, adding a new station, exchanging an arbitrary work standard in the station with an arbitrary work standard in another station, adding an arbitrary work standard to an arbitrary work standard in the station, or dividing a work standard belonging to the station into two stations is performed as correction operation of the station, and a displayed length of a bar graph of the station related to the correction is modified in accordance with the correction operation.

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Claim 40. (previously presented): The method according to claim 23, further comprising a step of displaying a user interface window for authenticating a user of the work assignment system .

Claim 41. (original): The method according to claim 39, wherein a station to be added includes a check work standard.

Claim 42. (previously presented): The method according to claim 25, wherein, in said output step, a total manhour of the work units of each station in a form of a bar graph in units of stations is displayed, and a height of the bar graph of a station including a work standard having a manhour larger than the average manhour value is limited by increasing a height of the bar graph.

Claim 43. (original): The method according to claim 23, wherein, in said output step, information related to the skill or experience of operators assigned in units of stations is obtained from a database containing information related to a skill or experience of an operator and the obtained information is displayed together on a display window of a display screen.

Claim 44. (currently amended): A computer readable storage medium storing computer-executable program codes to perform a work assignment method of assigning and composing a work formed from a plurality of work units to a plurality of stations, the program codes comprising:

a first program code for displaying names of the plurality of work units;

a second program code for inputting a user-selected manufacturing condition;

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a third program code for dividing the work units in accordance with the user-selected manufacturing condition and assigning at least one group of the divided work units to a one of the stations, said third program code comprising interface program code for attaching information representing parallel operation of works to the plurality of work units, and making a plurality of composition plans in consideration of the attached parallel operation and sending the composition plans to said output means, and said third program code further comprises attachment program code for causing a user to attach a single group code to a plurality of work units in order to assign the plurality of work units to a single station; and

a fourth program code for outputting an assignment result of the work units of each station to a work assignment file as a composition plan, said fourth program code assigns work units having the same group code to a station corresponding to the group code and

wherein each work standard as an assignment target has data representing continuous and parallel operations of work units, and said third program code comprises detecting program code for detecting that the user executes, for an arbitrary work standard, group designation to alter the continuous and parallel operations through said attachment program code, and output program code for, when the detection is done, outputting a warning message or inhibiting the group designation.

Claim 45. (cancelled).

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Claim 46. (previously presented): The system according to claim 1, further comprising a user interface means having a display unit for displaying a chart showing a priority order relationship representing continuous and parallel operations of work units, and a code attachment means that displays work units having the same group code on said display unit so as to discriminate the work units from work units having another group code and work units having no group code.

Claim 47. (cancelled).

Claim 48. (currently amended): The system according to claim [[47]] 1, wherein said detection means determines that the continuous and parallel operations are altered upon detecting that the user designates first and second groups so as to insert a work which should belong to the first group between two work units belonging to the second group.

Claim 49. (currently amended): The system according to claim 1, wherein said system further comprises simulation means for executing simulation of a production operation in the plurality of stations on the basis of the composition plan acquired from said assignment means, said simulation means being capable of transferring output data representing a condition and execution result of the simulation to said assignment means, and said assignment means comprises averaging means for ~~hanging~~ changing assignment of each station on the basis of the output data acquired from said simulation means and data representing performance of each of the plurality

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of stations so as to satisfy the predetermined condition, thereby making a new composition plan in which unbalance in works between the stations is eliminated.

Claim 50. (original): The system according to claim 49, wherein said simulation means comprises a user interface capable of setting a defective inclusion ratio of a part or material actually used for production of units in the plurality of stations, an operation error ratio of each station, yield of units and variation range of the yield related to the defective inclusion ratio and operation error ratio and setting a value representing performance of each of the plurality of stations, and outputs margin for works of each station, stagnation of fabricated products, and a quantity of completed nondefective products as the execution result of the simulation.

Claim 51. (original): The system according to claim 49, wherein said assignment means comprises first conversion means for converting the made composition plan into a format loadable as the manhour of each station for the simulation so as to transfer the composition plan to said simulation means.

Claim 52. (original): The system according to claim 51, wherein said first conversion means includes the manhour of each station in data of a file to be output to said simulation means.

Claim 53. (original): The system according to claim 49, wherein said simulation means comprises second conversion means for converting the condition of the simulation into a format with which said assignment means can load a condition for

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composition plan making and the value representing the performance so as to transfer the condition and execution result of the simulation to said assignment means.

Claim 54. (original): The system according to claim 53, wherein said simulation means includes a value representing the manhour of each station and a value representing performance of each station in the data of the file to be output to said assignment means.

Claim 55. (original): The system according to claim 49, wherein in making a new composition plan on the basis of the output data acquired from said simulation means and the value representing the performance of each of the plurality of stations, when a constraint condition for the continuous and/or parallel operation of assembly works as the plurality of work units is preset by the user, said averaging means makes a composition plan satisfying the constraint condition.

Claim 56. (original): The system according to claim 49, wherein in making a new composition plan on the basis of the output data acquired from said simulation means and the value representing the performance of each of the plurality of stations, when a group of a plurality of types of assembly works in assembly works as the plurality of work units is preset by the user, said averaging means assigns the plurality of types of assembly works included in the group to a single station.

Claim 57. (original): The system according to claim 49, wherein said assignment means comprises means for changing the number of stations on the basis of a time required for works of each station, which is changed in consideration of the yield of

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units to be produced in the plurality of stations, and a stop time and average performance of each station.

Claim 58. (original): The system according to claim 49, wherein said assignment means comprises a user interface capable of setting the number of units to be produced in one day by one crew as a set of a plurality of operators assigned to each station and the number of units per day, which is excluded from a production line by the crew on a display window in which a condition for calculation of the number of units to be invested into a top station of the production line formed from the plurality of stations can be set.

Claim 59. (original): The system according to claim 49, wherein said assignment means displays a display window including a user interface capable of setting a one-day working time of one crew as a set of a plurality of operators assigned to each station of a production line formed from the plurality of stations and a stop time of the production line.

Claim 60. (original): The system according to claim 49, wherein said simulation means displays a display window comprising a user interface capable of setting a one-day working time of one crew as a set of a plurality of operators assigned to each station of a production line formed from the plurality of stations and changeably setting a stop time of the production line in units of days or time zones by inputting a probability distribution, average value, and variance value, and displays a one-day

operation time of the crew in the display window in units of predetermined times as a result of setting of the set one-day working time and stop time.

Claim 61. (original): The system according to claim 49, wherein said simulation means displays a display window including a user interface capable of setting manhours of works assigned to each of the plurality of stations, a value representing performance of each station, and upper and lower limit values of a variation width of the value in units of time zones and changeably setting the value representing the performance in accordance with time and probability distribution within a range of the set predetermined variation width, calculates a one-day production quantity of one crew as a set of a plurality of operators assigned to each station of a production line formed from the plurality of stations on the basis of the conditions set in the display window, and displays the calculated production quantity in the display window.

Claim 62. (original): The system according to claim 49, wherein said simulation means can set, in a display window including a user interface, a defective inclusion ratio of a part or material actually used for production of units in the plurality of stations, yield of each station in accordance with an operation error ratio, and a station from which a defective product is to be excluded and set the yield determined by the operation error ratio changeably in accordance with probability distribution in units of time zones, calculates a one-day production quantity of one crew as a set of a plurality of operators assigned to each station of a production line formed from the plurality of

stations on the basis of the conditions set in the display window, and displays the calculated production quantity in the display window.

Claim 63. (original): The system according to claim 49, wherein said simulation means comprises a user interface capable of setting, in addition to the plurality of stations included in the composition plan acquired from said assignment means, an assembly station for performing an assembly work independently of the stations and/or a readjustment station for readjusting a defective product generated in the plurality of stations included in the composition plan and returning the readjusted defective product to the plurality of stations again as a nondefective product.

Claim 64. (original): The system according to claim 63, wherein a defective item of the defective product generated in the plurality of stations included in the composition plan, a station where the defective product is generated, and the readjustment station for returning the defective product after readjustment in accordance with the station where the defective product is generated can be set in the user interface of said simulation means.

Claim 65. (original): The system according to claim 49, wherein in addition to the operators in the composition included in the composition plan acquired from said assignment means, a support operator who supports the operators in the composition independently of the composition can be set in the user interface of said simulation means, and when the support operator is set as an alternate operator, an unaided assembly operator, a management operator, and a readjustment operator, the number of alternate

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operators to be transferred to a station of the composition can be changeably set in units of days in accordance with the probability distribution by setting the necessary number of support operators to be required and setting an attendance ratio of each operator in the composition by setting the probability distribution, average value, and variance value, and an upper limit value of the number of readjustment operators can be changeably set in units of days by subtracting the number of alternate operators to be transferred to the station from the number of support operators.

Claim 66. (original): The system according to claim 49, wherein said averaging means displays a display window including a user interface capable of setting a value representing performance of each station as a condition for calculation of a target manhour of the station.

Claim 67. (original): The system according to claim 49, wherein in making a new composition plan on the basis of the output data acquired from said simulation means and the value representing the performance of each of the plurality of stations, said averaging means exchanges works of the stations so as to make the manhour of each station close to a target manhour on the basis of a difference of the target manhour and a corresponding actual manhour of each station and the continuous and/or parallel operation preset for an assembly work as the work standard.

Claim 68. (original): The system according to claim 67, wherein in exchanging the works of the stations, when a group of a plurality of types of assembly works in assembly works as the plurality of work units is preset by the user, said

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averaging means assigns the plurality of types of assembly works included in the group to a single station.

Claim 69. (original): The system according to claim 49, wherein said assignment means can set and change the number of units to be excluded from a station during production by one crew as a set of a plurality of operators assigned to each station and set and change a stop time of a production line and an expected composition efficiency value, and comprises a user interface for calculating a time and the number of stations required for a work of each station on the basis of values of set and changed number of units to be excluded, stop time, and expected composition efficiency and displaying a calculation result.

Claim 70. (original): The method according to claim 23, wherein said method further comprises a simulation step of executing simulation of a production operation in the plurality of stations on the basis of the composition plan acquired in said assignment step, and said assignment step includes an averaging step of changing assignment of each station on the basis of a condition and execution result of the simulation, which are acquired in said simulation step, and data representing performance of each of the plurality of stations so as to satisfy the predetermined condition, thereby making a new composition plan in which unbalance in works between the stations is eliminated, said simulation step and said averaging step being repeatedly executed until a desired simulation execution result is obtained.

Claim 71. (original): The method according to claim 70, wherein, in said simulation step, a margin for works of each station, stagnation of fabricated products, and a quantity of completed nondefective products are outputted, as the execution result of the simulation, in accordance with setting a defective inclusion ratio of a part or material actually used for production of units in the plurality of stations, an operation error ratio of each station, yield of units and variation range of the yield related to the defective inclusion ratio, operation error ratio, and a value representing performance of each of the plurality of stations.

Claim 72. (original): The method according to claim 70, wherein, in said averaging step, a composition is planed to satisfy a constraint condition for the continuous and/or parallel operation of assembly works as the plurality of work units, when making a new composition plan on the basis of the condition and execution result of the simulation, which are acquired in said simulation step, and the value representing the performance of each of the plurality of stations.

Claim 73. (original): The method according to claim 70, wherein, in said averaging step, a plurality of types of assembly works included in a group of the plurality of types of assembly works in the assembly works as the plurality of work units are assigned into a single station, when making a new composition plan on the basis of the condition and execution result of the simulation, which are acquired in said simulation step, and the value representing the performance of each of the plurality of stations.

Claim 74. (original): The method according to claim 70, wherein, in said assignment step, the assignment of each station is changed in consideration of the yield of units to be produced in the plurality of stations and a stop time and average performance of each station, and the number of stations are changed on the basis of a time required for works of each station.

Claim 75. (original): The method according to claim 70, wherein, in said assignment step, a display window capable of setting a condition for calculation of the number of units to be invested into a top station of a production line formed from the plurality of stations is arranged to have a user interface capable of setting the number of units to be produced in one day by one crew as a set of a plurality of operators assigned to each station and the number of units per day, which is excluded from the production line by the crew.

Claim 76. (original): The method according to claim 70, wherein, in said assignment step, a display window, which includes a user interface capable of setting a one-day working time of one crew as a set of a plurality of operators assigned to each station of a production line formed from the plurality of stations and a stop time of the production line, is displayed.

Claim 77. (original): The method according to claim 70, wherein, in said simulation step, a display window comprising a user interface capable of setting a one-day working time of one crew as a set of a plurality of operators assigned to each station of a production line formed from the plurality of stations and changeably setting a stop

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time of the production line in units of days or time zones by inputting a probability distribution, average value and variance value are displayed, and a one-day operation time of the crew is displayed, as a result of setting the items, in units of predetermined times on the display window.

Claim 78. (original): The method according to claim 70, wherein, in said simulation step, a display window, which includes a user interface capable of setting manhours of works assigned to each of the plurality of stations, a value representing performance of each station, and upper and lower limit values of a variation width of the value in units of time zones and changeably setting the value representing the performance in accordance with time and probability distribution within a range of the set predetermined variation width is displayed, a one-day production quantity of one crew as a set of a plurality of operators assigned to each station of a production line formed from the plurality of stations is calculated on the basis of the conditions set in the display window, and the calculated production quantity is displayed on the display window.

Claim 79. (original): The method according to claim 70, wherein, in said simulation step, a display window is arranged to include a user interface, a defective inclusion ratio of a part or material actually used for production of units in the plurality of stations, yield of each station in accordance with an operation error ratio, and a station from which a defective product is to be excluded and set the yield determined by the operation error ratio changeably in accordance with probability distribution in units of time zones, and a one-day production quantity of one crew as a set of a plurality of

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operators assigned to each station of a production line formed from the plurality of stations is calculated on the basis of the conditions set in the display window, and displaying the calculated production quantity on the display window.

Claim 80. (original): The method according to claim 70, wherein, in said simulation step, a user interface capable of setting, in addition to the plurality of stations included in the composition plan acquired in said assignment step, an assembly station for performing an assembly work independently of the stations and/or a readjustment station for readjusting a defective product generated in the plurality of stations included in the composition plan and returning the readjusted defective product to the plurality of stations again as a nondefective product is displayed.

Claim 81. (original): The method according to claim 80, wherein, in said simulation step, the user interface is designed to be able to set a defective item of the defective product generated in the plurality of stations included in the composition plan, a station where the defective product is generated, and the readjustment station for returning the defective product after readjustment in accordance with the station where the defective product is generated.

Claim 82. (original): The method according to claim 70, wherein, in said simulation step, the user interface is designed to be able to set, in addition to the operators in the composition included in the composition plan acquired in the assignment step, a support operator who supports the operators in the composition independently of the composition, and when the support operator is set as an alternate operator, an unaided

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assembly operator, a management operator, and a readjustment operator, changeably set the number of alternate operators to be transferred to a station of the composition in units of days in accordance with the probability distribution by setting the necessary number of support operators to be required and setting an attendance ratio of each operator in the composition by setting the probability distribution, average value, and variance value, and changeably set an upper limit value of the number of readjustment operators in units of days by subtracting the number of alternate operators to be transferred to the station from the number of support operators.

Claim 83. (original): The method according to claim 70, wherein, in said averaging step, a display window including a user interface capable of setting a value representing performance of each station as a condition for calculation of a target manhour of the station is displayed.

Claim 84. (original): The method according to claim 70, wherein, in said averaging step, works of the stations are exchanged so as to make the manhour of each station close to a target manhour on the basis of a difference of the target manhour and a corresponding actual manhour of each station and the continuous and/or parallel operation preset for an assembly work as the work standard, when a new composition plan is generated on the basis of the condition and execution result of the simulation in the simulation step and the value representing the performance of each of the plurality of stations.

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Claim 85. (original): The method according to claim 84, wherein, when exchanging the works of the stations and a group of a plurality of types of assembly works in assembly works as the plurality of work units is preset by the user, the plurality of types of assembly works are assigned to be included in the group to a single station in said averaging step.

Claim 86. (original): The method according to claim 70, wherein said assignment step including steps of:

changing the number of units to be excluded from a station during production by one crew as a set of a plurality of operators assigned to each station,

calculating a time and the number of stations required for a work of each station in accordance with setting and changing a stop time of a production line and an expected composition efficiency value, and displaying the calculated result.

Claim 87. (currently amended): A computer program storage medium storing ~~program codes of said work assignment system to realize said work assignment system of claim 49~~ by a computer system a work assignment system for assigning and composing a work formed from a plurality of work units to a plurality of stations, the program codes comprising:

a first program code for displaying names of the plurality of work units;

a second program code for inputting a user-selected manufacturing condition;

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a third program code for dividing the work units in accordance with the user-selected manufacturing condition and assigning at least one group of the divided work units to a one of the stations, said third program code comprising interface program code for attaching information representing parallel operation of works to the plurality of work units, and making a plurality of composition plans in consideration of the attached parallel operation and sending the composition plans to said output means, and said third program code further comprises attachment program code for causing a user to attach a single group code to a plurality of work units in order to assign the plurality of work units to a single station; and

a fourth program code for outputting an assignment result of the work units of each station to a work assignment file as a composition plan, said fourth program code assigns work units having the same group code to a station corresponding to the group code and

wherein each work standard as an assignment target has data representing continuous and parallel operations of work units, and said third program code comprises detecting program code for detecting that the user executes, for an arbitrary work standard, group designation to alter the continuous and parallel operations through said attachment program code, and output program code for, when the detection is done, outputting a warning message or inhibiting the group designation

the program codes further comprising a fifth program code for executing simulation of a production operation in the plurality of stations on the basis of the composition plan acquired from said third program code, said fifth program code being capable of transferring output data representing a condition and execution result of the simulation to said third program code, and said third program code comprises averaging program code for changing assignment of each station on the basis of the output data acquired from said fifth program code and data representing performance of each of the plurality of stations so as to satisfy the predetermined condition, thereby making a new composition plan in which unbalance in works between the stations is eliminated.

Claim 88. (previously presented): The system according to claim 2, wherein the user-selected manufacturing condition is an average value of manhours necessary to execute all the work units in the station.

Claim 89. (previously presented): The method according to claim 24, wherein the user-selected manufacturing condition is an average value of manhours necessary to execute all the work units in the station.

Reasons for Allowance

2. Claims 1-7, 9-29, 31-44, 46, and 48-89 are allowed.
3. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

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Yuri et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,249,715) discloses a work assignment system that allocates various groupings of work units among work stations. Yuri does not expressly teach that the assignment means comprises code attachment means for causing a user to attach a single group code to a plurality of work units in order to assign the plurality of work units to a single station and that the output means assigns work units having the same group code to a station corresponding to the group code. However, Official Notice is taken that it is old and well-known in the art of machine operation to group together similar tasks and assign the group of tasks to a machine customized to performing said type of tasks. Furthermore, Yuri does not expressly disclose or suggest that each work standard as an assignment target has data representing continuous and parallel operations of work units, and said assignment means comprises means for detecting that the user executes, for an arbitrary work standard, group designation to alter the continuous and parallel operations through said code attachment means, and means for, when the detection is done, outputting a warning message or inhibiting the group designation. While it is old and well-known in the art of manufacturing to alter continuous and parallel operations, the prior art of record fails to disclose or suggest the combination of all of the aforementioned limitations in a unified work assignment system. This combination of limitations is recited in claims 1-7, 9-29, 31-44, 46, and 48-89; therefore, claims 1-7, 9-29, 31-44, 46, and 48-89 are deemed to be allowable over the prior art of record.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably

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accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Conclusion

4. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Susanna M. Diaz whose telephone number is (571) 272-6733. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 10 am - 6 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tariq Hafiz can be reached on (571) 272-6729. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.


Susanna M. Diaz
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3623

June 19, 2006